

Remarks:

This amendment is responsive to the Office Action mailed on October 13, 2004 setting a three month shortened statutory period for response expiring on January 13, 2005. Claims 12 through 27 were allowed. Claims 1, 5-7, 9 and 10 were rejected. Claims 2-4, 8 and 11 were objected to as containing allowable subject matter but depending from a rejected base claim.

Claims 1, 5-7, 9 and 10 have been canceled, but are retained in this application pending the filing of a continuation application to further prosecute these rejected claims. Claims 2-4, 8 and 11 have been amended into independent form, including all of the limitations of any intervening claims. Accordingly, these claims are believed to be in allowable form. These claims have not been amended in order to patentably distinguish over the cited art of record, but rather have been rewritten based on the Examiner's identification of allowable subject matter recited therein. Indeed, rewritten claims 2, 3, 4, 8 and 11 each recites each of the same limitations as originally filed with the present application; and thus, each of these claims has not been subjected to a "narrowing" amendment.

Claims 1, 9 and 10 were rejected under 35 USC. 103(a) as unpatentable over Kverneland in view of Nestegard. These claims have been canceled, rendering discussion of this rejection in this application generally moot. However, Applicant believes that these claims are patentable as written and thus does not relinquish the subject matter of these claims as unpatentable by virtue of the claim cancellation. Nor does Applicant believe that placing claims 2-4, 8 and 11 in independent form constitute a narrowing amendment. Applicant reserves the right to prosecute these claims further in a suitable continuation application.

Claims 5 stands rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over Knermeland in view of Nestegard and Olschansky et al. Claim 5 has been canceled, rendering discussion of this rejection in this application generally moot. However, Applicant believes that this claim is patentable as written and thus does not relinquish the subject matter of this claim as unpatentable by virtue of the claim cancellation. Applicant reserves the right to prosecute this claim further in a suitable continuation application.

Claims 1, 6, 7, 9 and "42" stand rejected under 35 USC 103 as unpatentable over Graham. Applicant assumes that the rejection is based on Graham patent No. 5,042,797, as a number of patents to Graham have been disclosed. As a preliminary matter, there is no claim 42 in the present application. Applicant assumes this is an error. Further, on page 4 of the Office

Action, the examiner states: "In regard to claim (42) note elements (30 and 32)." Applicant assumes this to be a typographical error as "42" should be "1". In addition, the Examiner states "in regard to claim 17 the examiner considers....." It is assumed that the examiner instead is referring to claim 7 not 17. Finally, The examiner refers in this rejection to a patent to Stevens. No such patent is identifiable on the PTO 892 or on Applicant's 1449 form. Applicant believes that possibly the patent in question is 5,938,571. However, since claims 1, 6, 7 and 9 are canceled, further discussion of this rejection and this reference is generally moot. Clarification or confirmation as to the identity of this reference is, however, respectfully requested. Applicant also believes that these claims are patentable as written and thus does not relinquish the subject matter of these claims as unpatentable by virtue of the claim cancellations. Applicant reserves the right to prosecute these claims further in a suitable continuation application.

Claims 2-4, 8, 11-27 remain pending in this application. Each and every one of these claims is believed to be allowable. This amendment is believed to be responsive to all points raised in the Office Action. The claim amendments set forth above are not made to distinguish over prior art. They have been made only as to form. In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would advance the prosecution of this Application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.


Respectfully submitted,

Date

11/29/04

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